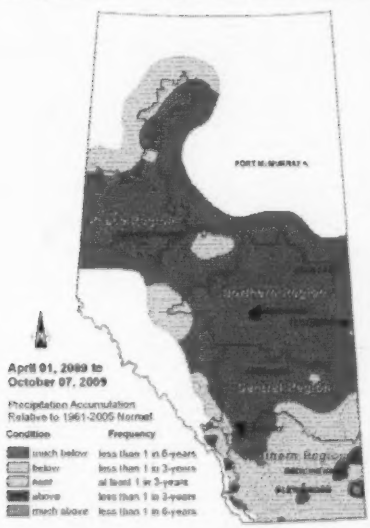
Crop Conditions as of October 8, 2009

Alberta producers took advantage of the warm, dry weather in late September, and made good progress in crop harvesting, prior to the cool, damp conditions in early October. Provincially, 91 per cent of the crop is already in the bin (see Table 1), compared to 60 per cent two weeks ago. At this time last year, harvest progress was similar. Crop harvest is virtually completed in most areas, but lags behind in the Peace Region with 81 per cent complete, and the Kitscoty/St. Paul/Bonnyville area at 75-80 per cent. Crops still in the field are mostly canola lying in the swath. In most years, harvest in Alberta is completed by the Thanksgiving weekend.

Many producers have reported higher yields than anticipated, particularly for canola. However, provincial average yields for spring cereals remain significantly below their 10-year averages, while canola yield is slightly below average. The lower yields can be attributed to the impact of cool, dry conditions in the spring, and to a lesser extent, below seasonal temperatures and inadequate precipitation during much of the summer. Hailstorms during the crop season also caused some crop damage in many areas. These adverse factors impacted crops relatively more in the Central, North East, and North West Regions, where yields are markedly below their 10-year averages. Yields for major crops are estimated to be below average in the Peace Region, and below average to average in the Southern Region. For most specialty crops, which are grown primarily in the Southern Region, yields are similar to their 10-year averages or better. Also, strong winds have caused some crop damage, especially to canola in the swath.

With respect to crop quality, warm, dry conditions in September have resulted in favorable grade estimates for spring cereals, while high green seed counts remain a concern for canola. Preliminary results of early samples (for 2009 crops in the bin) indicate that 85 per cent of hard red spring wheat and durum could be graded as No.1 or No. 2. Nearly 20 per cent of barley could be of malt quality, while 77 per cent of canola could be graded as No.1. The recent rain and snow, coupled with heavy frost, will likely result in some quality deterioration for crops still in the field.

Tame hay production is significantly below average, mainly due to reduced yields. Hay quality varies, mostly ranging from fair to good. To help secure forage supplies, some cereals and canola have been salvaged for forage production. Straw baling, mainly cereals and pulses, is reported in many areas. Additionally, pasture conditions in the province are rated as 69 per cent poor, 26 per cent fair, and five per cent good.



Conditions of winter cereals seeded this fall vary, mostly ranging from fair to good. Weed infestations are a concern for some areas. Also, dry conditions remain largely unchanged in the province. Overall, surface moisture is reported as 56 per cent poor, 29 per cent fair, and 15 per cent good, while the rating of sub-surface moisture is 67 per cent poor, 24 per cent fair, and nine per cent good.

Table 1: Alberta Crops Harvested, as of October 8, 2009

	South	Central	N. East	N. West	Peace	Alberta
Spring Wheat	95%	94%	92%	96%	87%	**93%**
Durum Wheat	99%	98%	95%	96%	90%	**99%**
Oats	96%	91%	84%	94%	80%	**88%**
Barley	95%	92%	91%	95%	91%	**93%**
Canola	86%	88%	83%	90%	73%	**83%**
Dry Peas	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	**100%**
All Crops	**95%**	**92%**	**89%**	**94%**	**81%**	**91%**

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Please note that this is the last Alberta Crop Report for the 2009 crop season.

Our thanks to Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, staff of AFSC and the Alberta Ag-Info Centre for their partnership and contribution to the Alberta Crop Reporting Program.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

The 2009 Alberta Crop Report Series continues to provide summaries for the following five regions:

Region One: Southern (Strathmore, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Foremost)

- Crop harvest is near completion in most areas of the region, with the exception of the Cardston area, at about 85 per cent complete. Overall, nearly 95 per cent of the crop has been combined. By crop type, harvest lags behind for canola and flax, both at 86 per cent complete, and sugar beets at 40 per cent. Strong winds have caused some damage to canola in the swath.
- Yield estimates range from below average to average for major crops, but are average to above average for most specialty crops. With respect to quality, grade estimates for major crops are generally favorable.
- Conditions of winter cereals seeded this fall vary, mostly ranging from fair to good. Third cut hay under irrigation has come off in good quality. Pasture conditions are reported as 58 per cent poor, 35 per cent fair, and seven per cent good.

Region Two: Central (Rimbey, Airdrie, Coronation, Oyen)

- With 92 per cent of the crop in the bin, harvest in the region is virtually completed. The majority of crops still in the field are late maturing canola and spring cereals, due to second growth. Strong winds have caused some damage to canola in the swath.
- Overall, crop yields are significantly below 10-year averages, although many producers have reported higher yields than anticipated. Some annual crops have been salvaged for forage production, particularly in eastern parts of the region. High green seed counts remain a concern for canola quality, while grade estimates for spring cereals range from average to above average.
- Tame hay yields, with varying quality, are markedly below average. Pasture conditions are reported as 67 per cent poor, 31 per cent fair, and two per cent good.

Region Three: North East (Smoky Lake, Vermilion, Camrose, Provost)

- Crop harvest is estimated at 89 per cent complete in the region. Compared to other crops, canola harvest lags behind, at 83 per cent complete. In the Kitscoty/St. Paul/Bonnyville area, only 75-80 per cent of the crop is in the bin. Weed infestations are a concern in some areas.
- Despite many producers reporting yields higher than expected, crop yields remain significantly below 10-year averages. With respect to quality, grade estimates are similar to 10-year averages for spring cereals, but are below average for canola.
- Tame hay production is significantly below average, mainly due to reduced yields. Hay quality varies, mostly ranging from fair to good. Pasture has been overgrazed, and is rated as 83 per cent poor, 15 per cent fair, and two per cent good.

Region Four: North West (Barrhead, Edmonton, Leduc, Drayton Valley, Athabasca)

- Producers in the region took advantage of the warm, dry weather in late September, and made good progress in crop harvesting, prior to the cool, damp conditions in early October. With 94 per cent of the crop in the bin, harvest is virtually completed in the region. Compared to other crops, canola harvest lags behind, at 90 per cent complete.
- Estimated crop yields are significantly below their 10-year averages. Crop quality ranges from average to above average for cereals, but is below average for canola.
- Due to low yields, tame hay production this year is markedly below the 10-year average. Hay quality varies, mostly ranging from fair to good. Pasture conditions are reported as 80 per cent poor, and 20 per cent fair.

Region Five: Peace River (Fairview, Falher, Grande Prairie, Valleyview)

- Rain and snow in early October have impeded field operations, and caused some delays in crop harvesting. Overall, 81 per cent of the crop has been combined. In the Manning area, only 70-75 per cent of the crop is in the bin. Compared to other crops, canola harvest lags behind, at 73 per cent complete. Some canola fields may not be harvested, due to crop development too far behind.
- Estimated yields are similar to the 10-year average for canola, but below average for cereals. With respect to quality, grade estimates are mostly favorable for both cereals and canola.
- Hay yields, with varying quality, are significantly below 10-year averages. Pasture conditions are rated as 57 per cent poor, 30 per cent fair, and 13 per cent good.

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Economics and Competitiveness Division
Statistics and Data Development Branch
October 14, 2009

Chuanliang Su, Crop Statistician
E-mail: chuanliang.su@gov.ab.ca
Phone: 780-422-2887

Note to Users: The contents of this document may not be used or reproduced without properly accrediting Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Economics and Competitiveness Division, Statistics and Data Development Branch.
The 2009 Alberta crop reporting series is available on the Internet at: *http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd4191*